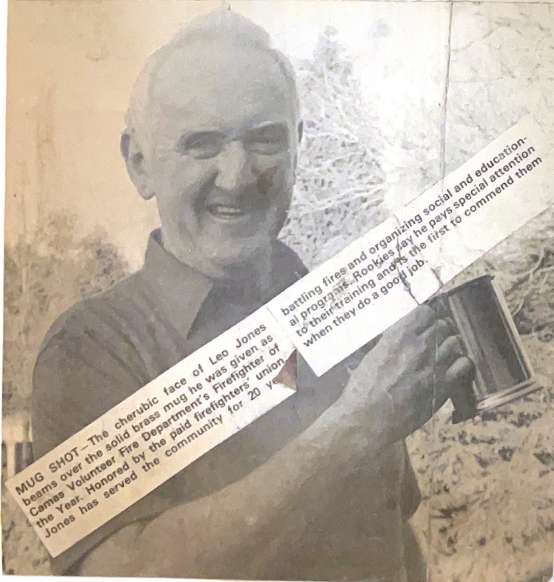


Leo Jones named Camas' new firefighter of the year

-1986-



By PATRICK WEBB

Leo Jones is one of a kind.

In the past 20 years he's put more into Camas than many of his peers, working full time and being active in two volunteer activities.

Now he has been honored as Camas Volunteer Firefighter of the year.

The award was presented by Local 2444 of the International Association of Firefighters. It commends participation, attendance and work with the department on fires and community projects.

Those events include the fishing derby, Camas Days, CAROL Christmas program, the fun run in May and various school safety education programs.

It is the second accolade for Jones in the last couple of years: Camas school officials dedicated the new Doc Harris stadium locker rooms in his name to thank him for his long service as a football head line-man.

He has also been active in the community as a Little League umpire and played key roles in promoting school levies and bond issues.

The sports award—and this latest honor—have been the only two times in his life that he's been lost for words, a situation which makes his wife Donna chuckle.

Jones, office manager for Evergreen Distributing in Vancouver, is a former longtime employee with Safeway stores and was the first manager of the new Camas store.

Working for Safeway, Jones joined the Vernonia, Ore., fire department in 1958. He didn't have to go far to respond because the station was attached to the store building.

"One day after arriving in town they asked me to join the fire department," he recalls.

Transferring with Safeway in 1959 he spent a couple of years in the St. Helens, Ore. department before coming to Camas. In 1961 Jim Coffman and others brought Jones into the department.

Since that time, with a brief interruption when Jones went to Redmond, Ore., in the mid-sixties, he has served with the Camas department.

He has seen three chiefs:

Willard McCoy, Deloy Little and Maynard Erickson.

In those early days Jones recalls that volunteers at the fire station—located where the Camas Library stands—would respond to first aid calls as well as fires.

Over the years modern lime green pumpers have replaced the old red trucks. The East County

Paramedic program was started in 1980 to coordinate regional ambulance services.

Jones said a major improvement has been in better self-contained breathing apparatus—he recalls a time when he landed in the hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation when overcome during a fire.

Jones' service was

commended by Camas Fire Chief Erickson. "He has been active in many aspects of the department, not just firefighting," he said.

His sense of humor has also enhanced morale. "Even when things may not be the best he brings out the funny side," said Erickson.

Paramedic Dean Rasmussen, who is also a

fire volunteer, said Jones will always assist committees organizing community activities.

"He will cut you down with a joke or some remark but he's also the first to be in there helping when he's needed." There are three or four guys I like to have behind me when I go into a burning building and he's definitely one of them.

Paid firefighter Ken Hill said Jones' emphasis on quality training of volunteers is evident. "If you are at a fire he will be the first one to say 'That was good.' He is also the first to jump on your tail if you screw up."

Jones has responded to a number of serious fires over the past 20 years. The biggest was at Corrosion Controllers about 12 years ago. "It can be a scary situation," said Jones.

In one house fire he went into a blazing building with Boj Taylor and Don Hagen and began climbing the stairs to the

seat of the fire—just as

colleagues vented the roof. "It was the biggest ball of fire I have ever seen in my life. It just rolled us down those stairs. That was the scariest moment I've ever had."

Jones shrugs off compliments from rookies he has helped with train-

ing, saying he is simply doing the same thing that colleagues did back in the early 1960s when he joined the department.

"I get involved in a lot of things," said Jones. "But I hope whatever I do, I do the best I can."

Jones credits much of his success to his supportive family. He and Donna have been married for 29 years, and have four children, Cheryl, Kristi, Leah and Kevin.

"There are a lot of projects that we have worked on together," he said.

Jones makes no apologies for his cutting sense of humor. "That's my nature," he beams. "I've always got something to say."

But I hope when the work has to be done I can be in there working hard.

MUG SHOT—The cherubic face of Leo Jones beams over the solid brass mug he was given as Camas Volunteer Fire Department's Firefighter of the Year. Honored by the paid firefighters union, Jones has served the community for 20 years.

batting fires and organizing social and educational programs. Rookies say he pays special attention to their training and is the first to commend them when they do a good job.